

A painting of a woman in profile, looking left. She has dark hair pulled back and is wearing a blue garment with a small floral brooch. The background features a pattern of green and yellow shapes on a light background. The painting style is expressive with visible brushstrokes.

Marguerite Louppe  
*and*  
Maurice Brianchon

Mirrors of Midcentury  
French Culture



## FOREWORD

The Walsh Gallery at Seton Hall University is pleased to host “Marguerite Louppe and Maurice Brianchon: Mirrors of Midcentury French Culture.” This exhibition is wonderfully suited to the Walsh Gallery’s mission to enhance the intellectual life of Seton Hall University and the greater community through dynamic and interdisciplinary exhibitions of exemplary artistic and cultural value. We wish to thank curators David Hirsh and William Corwin for organizing this thoughtful exhibition which highlights the work of husband and wife artists, Maurice Brianchon and Marguerite Louppe - both accomplished painters, although Louppe was under-recognized during her lifetime. This exhibition sheds light on the couple’s art practices as well as their private and public lives, in part during a tumultuous period in 20th century Europe.

*Jeanne Brasile, Director  
Walsh Gallery at Seton Hall University*





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**MARGUERITE LOUPPE**

Tabletop Still-Life  
*undated, oil on canvas,  
37.5 x 80 cm*







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**MAURICE BRIANCHON**

Bal Masqué  
1948, oil on panel,  
33 x 55 cm

## To Look again with Different Eyes: *Marguerite Louppe and Maurice Brianchon*

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One no longer hears much talk about the School of Paris. In the 50s and 60s, one still spoke of such things. This term denotes the early decades of the 20th century when Paris was the capital of the western art world. Ironically, while the *École de Paris* might conjure up images of the bohemian artist, railing against the academy and creating abstract art, in actuality, drawing skills and techniques were highly prized, and the art was typically figurative rather than abstract. There were also amongst these artists, those who had a passion for color which they thoroughly exploited. Subsequently such overlapping movements as Orphism, Synchronism, Fauvism Analytic Cubism and later Synthetic Cubism were generated from this artistic ferment. After World War II, the term took on a more general use, signifying the international mix of artists who sought to re-establish Paris as the home of Modernism. What stood in their way was the newly emergent School of New York, which was identified with Abstract Expressionism and the triumph of an American style of painting.

Marguerite Louppe (1902-1988) and Maurice Brianchon (1899-1979) whose works are rooted in pre-World War II abstraction, were denizens of the School of Paris. They were members of the in-between generation that emerged after World War I and matured before World War II. Their work is representative of those artists of the post-World War II period who struggled to maintain for themselves not the tradition of the Parisian avant-garde, but the achievements of Modernism itself, which consisted of Cubism and those variants of it, influenced by Henri Matisse's emphasis on drawing, flat shapes, color, and surface activity. Both Louppe and Brianchon's works were initially affected by the genres and formalism of Post-Impressionism and the late Cubism of the 1920s. These painting methodologies/philosophies became for them an armature which permitted them to aesthetically augment the realism underlying their depictions of their everyday world.

After a hundred plus years of Cubism's influences, we forget how radically Cubism departed from the codes of representation. Cubism transformed how artists thought about what a picture, or a painting might be. At the heart of Cubism in all its stages and facets was an emphasis on the underlying geometry of pictorial construction to which all other aspects of a picture were subordinated. After much struggle, we might say resistance, on both their parts, Brianchon and Louppe in their work of the 50s and 60s both succumb to emphasizing the primacy of paintings' underlying geometric structures. Brianchon did this through his simplification of forms, and Louppe by the articulation of the linear-skewed geometry that was the foundation of her compositions. Louppe, in taking up this idiom is unique – it is hard to name any women of her generation working in this manner, other than perhaps Maria Viera da Silva, who pushed painting more toward pure abstraction.

Though they share a history of aesthetic and formal influences, walking through this exhibition of Louppe and Brianchon's works, we are reminded they are very different artists. Presented together as they are here, a composite is formed — not only of two artists working side-by-side; evolving their works by fits and false-starts, but also of the differing artistic sentiments, aesthetic issues and practices that epitomize their times. Never radicals, in the sense that they did not commit themselves to overthrowing the existing order, Louppe and Brianchon throughout their careers instead mine the under-developed aspects of modern art. they seek to revive or redeploy what might be thought to have been stylistically exhausted or negated.



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**MARGUERITE LOUPPE**

Studio Still Life with Sketch

*undated, oil on canvas,*

*100 x 81 cm*



Both artists are insightful when it comes to their sources; they exploit rather than merely adopt the style of their contemporaries. This is apparent in the hybrid nature of their mature works which are the result of both artists viewing Cubism to be more method of stylization, rather than a means to transform painting into a source of multiple sensations or the representation of a fourth dimension. Louppe and Brianchon reject the Cubist's critique of traditional painting as being limited because it only offers one point of view—they do not play with contradictory visual codes (positive and negative space). Instead they embrace the notion that the painted image is a single complex moment of time/ space.

The two painters use their appropriation of the Cubist syntax to their own ends as both strategy and trope. Stylistically and conceptually, they seem to be drawn to the fundamental laws of painting as set forth by Albert Gleize and the late Cubism of Jean Metzinger. Subsequently, Brianchon and Louppe's primary objectives early on appear to be that of animating a painting's planar surface in a logical manner. Cubism is used to extrapolate the structures of material objects, transforming them into flattened forms and planes of chromatic contrast. Subsequently, the themes of pictorial architecture and tradition are consolidated and integrated in Louppe's work while Brianchon sought to restore the unchanging principles of structure in painting. Within his work he adheres to a single, fundamental principle; a picture's composition must give representation to a cohesive sense space and time. Here we might also find the influence of Henri Le Fauconnier (1881-1946) who used the Cubist dissection of form in order to analyze objects.

Early in his career, Brianchon painted in a style influenced by the realism and composition of Post-Impressionism. Within these early works he used narrative and anecdote to make explicit the affinities held in common by the very different artists who were his influences. In *Bal Masqué* (1948) Degas' ballerinas and Picasso's harlequins come to mirror one another as they are made to occupy the same flattened stage space of a costume ball. Louppe's endeavors tend to be more theoretical; within her work, we travel from Braque-like cubist still-lives to the late studio tableaus such as *Studio Still Life with Sketch* (undated) whose geometry borrows from the Crystal Cubism of Albert Gleize and Juan Gris. In these works, she invokes the deChirico-esque picture-inside-the-picture motif, yet avoids becoming surrealist. In another of her studio paintings *Les Trois Chevalets* (undated), she appears to be weighing her options, pitting mimesis against a purely abstract geometry. Though spatially naturalistic, this painting's grey muted palette, and her composition of frames within frames has an aesthetic affinity with Alberto Giacometti's studio and portrait paintings.

We can see how with persistent success in the years between the wars, they elaborated and advanced their own pictorial and aesthetic concerns and sensibilities. The originality of their work though is most apparent in the period after 1961, when they move to their country house of Truffières, in the south-west of France. Perhaps being away from Paris, or being more mature; respectively 59 (Louppe) and 62 (Brianchon), afforded them greater focus, clarity, and independence. Their pictures become a synthesis of their differing concerns, while their imagery becomes more personal and domestic; Louppe increasingly uses her studio as subject-matter, Brianchon takes delight in making still-lives of such modest consumables as brioches, or apples.

Brianchon was acknowledged in France and to a lesser extent in the US, and while Louppe showed regularly, she was more reclusive. In the early years of his career, Brianchon pushed figuration and narrative toward color and form, setting out on the road first surveyed by impressionists such as Degas and post-impressionists like Vuillard and Bonnard. Brianchon during this period increasingly employs the grid to emphasize the flatness and frontality of his pictures. The grid later becomes the explicit underlying and regulating geometry of the late still-lives and, for example, his studies of New York skyscrapers. In these works his concerns for figuration, color and formalism finally converge, resulting in ever-simpler and nuanced compositions devoid of narrative. Seemingly this was prompted by an attraction to Matisse's use of broad areas of flat color and his use of pattern.



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**MAURICE BRIANCHON**

Nature Morte aux Brioches

1963, oil on canvas,

65 x 92 cm

The ever increasing simplification within Brianchon's paintings blurs the distinction between objects and setting, and between figure and background. Brianchon's late still-lives of apples or brioches, sitting on a white plate resting on a table-top manipulates the flat abstract planar surfaces. While the mimetic subject-matter remains readable, the surrounding room is transformed into a construction of large, hard-edged planes of crisp, flat color. These paintings are as if Matisse had decided to model his still-lives on de Stijl paintings.

Louppe on the other hand, is more lyrical and employed still-life, landscape and studio imagery as her primary vehicles. Superimposed over these are a schema of oblique overlapping planar constructions, tending away from equilibrium, while also serving as a foundation to flatten the individual elements onto a unifying surface. Within the context of Cubism, artists were forced into the position of re-evaluating the role of the observer. Classical linear and aerial perspective, uninterrupted surface transitions and chiaroscuro were pushed aside. What remained was a series of images obtained by the observer (the artist) in different frames of reference as the object was being painted. Essentially, observations became linked through a system of coordinated transformations. For Louppe, the result was a clear-cut underlying geometric framework that controls all of the elements of her pictures. The conflicting pictorial systems simultaneously resist becoming a unified whole, yet give her compositions an underlying sense of order and clarity. What these devices do for Louppe's work is to introduce a formal frame of reference that culminates in a growing sense of cohesive unity which serves as both expression and a purifying sense of constraint.

This exhibition with its unaffected historicity, demonstrates the two principle courses afforded to young French Modernist painters in the period between the world wars when avant-garde practices came to be adapted, normalized, and in the face of an increasingly conservative environment, needed to be defended. In this context Louppe and Brianchon should be thought of as adventurous speculators — serious, practitioners who exploited, synthesized and sustained the most advanced principles, tendencies, and styles of their times. In hind-sight it is important to remember Louppe and Brianchon within their own era would have been seen as advocates, believers and promoters—advancing the cause of modern art.

*Saul Ostrow  
New York City, November 2017*

*Saul Ostrow is an independent critic, curator and Art-Editor-at-Large of Bomb Magazine, and in 2010 he founded the all-volunteer non-profit organization Critical Practices Inc., whose projects include exhibitions, open forums, and publication.*





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**MARGUERITE LOUPPE**

Les Trois Chevalets  
undated, oil on canvas,  
116 x 89.3 cm





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**MAURICE BRIANCHON**

Nature Morte aux Pommes

1970, oil on canvas,

81 x 65 cm



# MAURICE BRIANCHON

1899-1979



Maurice Brianchon is an example of that rare breed of artist who exists not only as a great creative talent, but also as an important historical figure, standing at the confluence of a variety of important early and mid-century French cultural movements. He achieved this through a great versatility in his artistic practice: not only was he a painter in the very traditional sense of the word; he was also deeply committed to the dream of interdisciplinary partnerships between artists, writers and composers, and even politicians; fostering a community of thinkers from all backgrounds while maintaining a deeply humble perspective on his own position within the cultural network of his time. His greatest achievements clearly exist in the form of his luminous, luxurious and pleasure-filled canvasses, drawings, watercolors and illustrations. Yet, it could be argued that by helping bring into existence the productions of Francis Poulenc, Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud, or setting to image the poetry of André Gide and Colette, or even helping to fulfill the obligations of the French Fourth Republic at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, one may find his greatest lasting contribution to French culture.

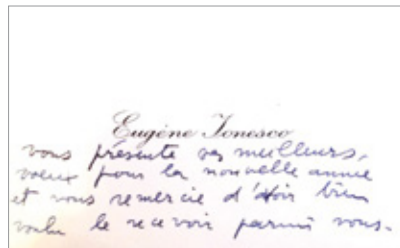
What also clearly made Brianchon's versatility possible between the competing worlds of art, theater music, teaching and design, was this deep personal humility that endeared him to friends and colleagues and fostered relationships, artistic and otherwise, of great trust and respect. He counted among his friends a diverse group of artists and thinkers such as Cecil Beaton, Eugene Ionesco, Henri Matisse, Jacques Villon and Ossip Zadkine (illus. 1-5). In the painter Marguerite Louppe, his wife, he also found a lifelong sounding board for his aesthetic choices—the two discussed their work. If we are to trust the account of Pierre-Antoine Brianchon, Maurice trusted Marguerite's critiques above all others. She was an incredibly able studio manager and curator of Maurice's work as well, no small feat while maintaining her own professional painting practice. Olivier Daulte and Pierre-Antoine Brianchon produced a catalogue *Raisonné* of the paintings of Brianchon in 2008, and Francois Daulte wrote an accompanying catalog for the painter's retrospective in Lausanne at the Fondation de l'Hermitage in 1986. Both of these books are superb resources (in French) on the life and work of Brianchon. What follows here is primarily a narrative of the artist's life based on those seminal volumes.

Brianchon was born in 1899 in Fresnay-sur-Sarthe, near Le Mans. Maurice spent a year at the École National des Beaux-arts in Bordeaux before the family moved to Paris in 1917. The following year he enrolled in the École des Arts Décoratifs where he studied under Eugene Morand, the playwright and painter who would be a supporter and mentor to Brianchon through his early career, as well as the father of his close friend, the controversial novelist Paul Morand. Morand's interdisciplinary approach as a professional artist was a model for Brianchon as well. Several of Brianchon's fellow students would become life-long colleagues and friends: Roland Oudot, Raymond Legueult and Francois Desnoyer.

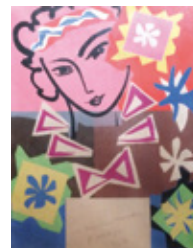
Brianchon won the Prix Blumenthal in 1924 and travelled throughout Spain on a grant from the l'École des Arts Décoratifs that year with Legueult, becoming fascinated with the paintings of Velasquez and El Greco. The following year the two young painters designed the sets for the Massenet opera *Griseldis*, the libretto written by their former professor Morand. They again worked together in 1925 on a short opera *La Naissance de la Lyre*, with music by Albert Roussel, for L'Opéra de Paris. Though he first exhibited paintings at the Salon de Tuileries in 1923, it was not until 1927 that Brianchon had his first major solo exhibition at the Gallerie Le Portique.



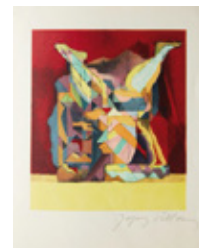
1. Cecil Beaton, Portrait of Brianchon



2. Eugene Ionesco, calling Card



3. Henri Matisse, inscribed lithograph



4. Jacques Villon, inscribed card



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**MAURICE BRIANCHON**

Nu Assis,  
1946, oil on canvas,  
92 x 65 cm



In 1934 Brianchon achieved national recognition by representing France in the Venice Biennale. Six of his canvasses shared the French Pavilion with works by Manet. This was a tremendous honor and must have seemed a vindication of the artist's practice which was more of an allegiance with Post-Impressionism, in the face of the upheavals of Fauvism and Cubism that had transformed the French art scene at the start of the century. That same year he married fellow painter Marguerite Louppe, whom he had met at an event at the famously edgy and experimental Académie Julian (introduced by Roland Oudot). Their son Pierre-Antoine was born the following year.

Brianchon's work is filled with the influences and the craftsmanship of Corot, Manet and Vuillard and in his paintings he reflects their marvelous intelligence at rendering the subtlety and gesture of the human condition through open and lively brushwork. We can also see the aforementioned Spanish artists as well. His subject matter draws heavily on Degas and especially Watteau, as he chooses to focus not on a transformative methodology for his painting, but instead to investigate the psychological nuance of a character's gaze, tilt of the head, or gesture (illus. 6,7). Brianchon's source material lay in the circles in which he moved, backstage at theater productions, bourgeois society dinner parties, and days at the races. He sets his narratives in the glamorous surroundings he enjoyed, but manages the remarkable achievement of portraying them without pretense. Brianchon is a discrete spectator on the drama which unfolds before him.

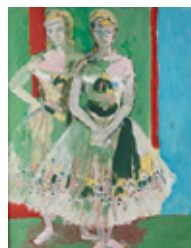
Brianchon had begun his long and distinguished teaching career in 1930 at the École de Couture, but in 1936 he returned to his Alma Mater the École des Arts Décoratifs. In 1949 he became a professor at the École des Beaux-Arts: over his long pedagogical career there, spanning three decades, he would teach and influence a generation of notable French artists, including Guy Bardone, André Brasilier, Bernard Cathelin, René Genis and Paul Guiramand. In 1936, he received his first major institutional commission, painting a pair of murals for the entry hall of the theater the Palais de Chaillot, at the Trocadéro. From that point until the late 50's Brianchon designed sets and costumes for performances of all kinds: for the ballet *Sylvia* by Leo Delibes in 1939, and for *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* by Ravel and *Animaux Modèles* by Francis Poulenc the following year. In 1939 Brianchon also garnered attention in the United States, receiving the Carnegie Institute's Garden Club Prize.

Poulenc and Brianchon became close friends and continued to work together on projects until the late 50's. It wasn't until after the war that the painter forged the other great artistic association for which he is remembered: in 1946 Madelaine Renaud and Jean-Louis Barrault asked him to design sets and costumes for Marivaux's *Fausse Confidences*. It was a partnership that would continue for a decade. That same year saw another arrival of sorts; the painter had been illustrating books for the printing house Ides et Calendes since the previous year, but in 1946 he illustrated the complete works of André Gide. He would continue to illustrate and create lithographic editions to accompany works of literature and poetry until 1970, culminating with a set of prints for Colette's *Le Blé en Herbe*, and several editions with the Famed Moulot Press.

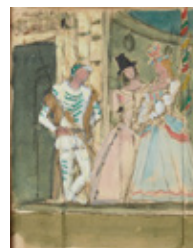
Brianchon reached the zenith of his career as a painter, exhibiting 135 paintings, as well as watercolors, drawings, lithographs and tapestries at the Musée des Art Décoratifs at the Louvre from March 15th through April 22, 1951. The exhibition was organized by his wife Marguerite. It was well-received critically and was a popular success as well. The first president of the Fourth Republic, Vincent Auriol, was an admirer of Brianchon and his work, and besides inviting him to state functions and receptions, commissioned him to design official menus and invitations for the office of the President. Auriol made Brianchon an Officer of the French Legion of Honor in 1953 (illus. 8) and that same year sent him as the official artist representative of the French nation to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (illus. 9,10). Brianchon had his first exhibition with the Wildenstein Gallery in London in 1951. In 1956 he travelled to Rome with Hans Arp and Jacques Villon to serve on the jury for the Prix del la VII Quadriennale National d'arte di Roma.



5. Ossip Zadkine, inscribed postcard



6. Maurice Brianchon, ballet study



7. Maurice Brianchon, theatrical study



8. Unknown photographer, Maurice Brianchon receives the Legion of Honor from President Auriol.



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**MAURICE BRIANCHON**

Conversation à la Plage,  
circa 1951, gouache, 32 x 23 cm

His retrospective at the Musée des Art Décoratifs at the Louvre occurred when he was 52 years old. By that point in his life he had already traversed a half-century of war, occupation, and artistic revolution with a steadiness and surefootedness of someone confident of his role in his world and sure of his craft, but with an openness to alternative methods that made him an extremely flexible, sophisticated, and sought-after artist. It is true that his work may not show the same tension or struggle both intellectually and physically as the works of DuBuffet or Yves Tanguy—both contemporaries born within a year of Brianchon's birth. Brianchon's work did not presume to challenge the way one looks at visual art, as Robert Rey said of him, "he was the result and not the synthesis of the French painting tradition."

In 1959 Brianchon sailed to New York for the first time to be present at the opening of the first of many of his exhibitions at the David B. Findlay Gallery. He filled a sketchbook with drawings of New York and its skyscrapers while there (illus. 11). As an antidote to their urban existence in Paris, the Brianchons purchased a rustic country estate in Périgord in 1960: the rambling buildings, pastoral vistas and light-filled studios of Truffières became a frequent subject of the paintings of both Maurice and Marguerite. They still spent most of their time in Paris and Maurice continued to show extensively in Europe, New York, and later Tokyo in the late 60's and 70's as well. A retrospective of the artist's work was presented at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Neuchatel in 1962. Not particularly to the artist's liking was the fact that he was increasingly being considered part of an artificially constructed artistic movement called the *Realité Poétique*, which featured such artists as Caillard, Cavaillès, Legueult, Limouse, Oudot, Planson and Terechkovitch. It seems almost impossible to classify Brianchon within an art historical movement or category, he had a pre-war painterly sensibility with deep affection for late nineteenth-century styles and motifs, but he was not old-fashioned. Like Boucher or Fragonard he embraced his position as a court painter and felt no need to distance himself or artificially impose a bohemian lifestyle on a successful career. He found more than enough inspiration for his work from the fabric of the circles in which he moved, and like Boucher or Fragonard, he integrated his critiques via the subtle psychological implications of the expressions and movements of his subjects.

Brianchon died in Paris in 1979. As per his wishes, no major exhibitions of his work were mounted until ten years after his death. This epilogue of quiet after the artist's extraordinarily productive life is an indication of the modesty with which he viewed his career and artistic output. Despite the fact that Brianchon had been chosen to represent France on numerous occasions—in Venice in 1934 shoulder to shoulder with Manet, and at Westminster Abbey in 1953, offering an artist's view of the most important event in England since the end of the war, he was just as content to illustrate the ochre wheat fields of the Dordogne and the kitchen table at his home Truffières as he was rendering the coronation. While many artists become obsessed with their legacy, Brianchon was quite clearly very content with his life as a working artist: he had achieved the very height of success in all of the chosen avenues his painting had taken him: an exhibition at the Louvre, a professor at the Paris Beaux-Arts, and collaborations with France's greatest writers and composers.

*William Corwin and David Hirsh*



Maurice Brianchon: 9 & 10, two pages from sketchbook of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation



11. page from New York Sketchbook





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**MAURICE BRIANCHON**

La Place de Passy Sous la Nieve

1943, oil on canvas,

25 x 34.5 cm





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**MARGUERITE LOUPPE**

Bouteilles et Flacons  
*undated, oil on canvas,  
81 x 100 cm*





# MARGUERITE LOUPPE

1902-1988



Marguerite Louppe's paintings are a visual metaphor of unity: a realistic painting practice under the influence of Purism, Cubism and Post-impressionism. Rather than adhere to any particular movement that was forming and coalescing around her in Paris, she took cues from contemporary aesthetic innovations and introduced them into her own work. Her earliest works are of Parisian street scenes and scenes of the bourgeois life she lived. Louppe then focused on theatrical still lifes, a genre she mastered and pursued throughout her career. In her later work she painted landscapes of Truffières, her country estate in the Dordogne; mature works by an artist who has found her most fertile subject. The rural landscape fitted her predisposition for solid sculptural forms and allowed her to simultaneously invent an imaginary plane of interconnectedness of forms, textures, tints and hues. Louppe created a quiet mathematical world, a more feminine answer to de Chirico's bleak surrealist landscapes; he was dealing with Italy's tumultuous history, Louppe was addressing the non-confrontational Perigordian countryside.

When Marguerite Louppe died in Paris in 1989, she left a legacy both in art and exhibiting that would have been considered a success by most standards. She showed widely in Paris, in solo exhibitions and group shows that featured the likes of Braque and Matisse. Her aesthetic did not exist in a vacuum. Louppe's paintings were seen by her contemporaries and it could even be argued that she held an unacknowledged spot amongst the painters of the *Realité Poétique* movement. This group of eight painters: Brianchon, Caillard, Cavailles, Legeult, Limouse, Oudot, Planson and Terechkovitch pursued many of the same artistic goals as she did and were well aware of her work. Brianchon, her husband, was the most famous and successful painter in the group, though he was not enthusiastic to be included. She was a constant and invaluable guide to him in his work, and he in hers. Marguerite and Jeanne Laillard (the wife of the painter Roger Limouse) were both painters and exhibited together with the male members of the group at the Salon de Tuileries in 1939—it is a not-unreasonable assumption that at that time it was convenient to leave these women out of the group for very conventional gender-biased reasons.

Despite their love for their home in Perigord, Louppe and Brianchon rejected the idea of existing as artistic hermits. They contributed to, and participated in vibrant Parisian society throughout their lives. For the two of them it seemed a mix of cagey political acumen and genuine love of artistic collaboration and interaction. They moved in the highest social and intellectual circles, associating with the composer Francis Poulenc, with whom the Brianchons had a close friendship, and the controversial writer Paul Morand, whose father Eugene, had been an influential professor of Brianchon. Louppe and Brianchon were close to Vincent Auriol, the 16th President of France (1947–54). Louppe worked on a book with noted member of the Academie Francaise Georges Duhamel in 1950. The Brianchons were also close friends of the actors Madelaine Renaud and Jean-Louis Barrault.

Marguerite Louppe was born on the 5th of September 1902, in the northern city Commercy. Her father, Alix-Jules Louppe was an engineer and most of the men in her family were trained as engineers, most of them at the highly esteemed École Polytechnique. Her mother, Marie-Henriette Juliette Sommer was, as her name would indicate, clearly of Germano-Lorraine origins. Her grand-uncle Jules-Albert Louppe was well-known in the engineering field and coordinated the construction of the famous bridge between Brest and the Plougastel peninsula in Brittany (designed by Freyssinet) that bears his name. There was a healthy environment of scientific creativity and a strong protestant work ethic in the family. Marguerite's brother Henri attended Polytechnique and rose to become a member of the board of SEITA, the French tobacco monopoly—the family was well connected and reasonably affluent.

Marguerite's family moved to Paris soon after her birth and settled in the 16th arrondissement. She attended the Lycée Molière, the third public girl's school in Paris, founded in 1888. It is not clear that she completed her baccalaureate, as her name does not appear in the list of recipients in the Molière alumni magazine, but that standardized test had only come into use three years before her graduation and was not mandatory at its inception. The Lycée Molière was a unique place at that time: due to its location and the fact that it had no fees, the girls came from a variety of backgrounds, both economic and ethnic—many of the girls being Protestant and Jewish. Added to this was the historical timeframe. Louppe attended the lycée from approximately 1915 through 1918, so the girls found themselves holding fundraisers, writing letters and making bandages for soldiers at the front on an almost daily basis. Lycée Molière was also famous for strict regulation and rigorous standards, so the necessity of good



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**MARGUERITE LOUPPE**

Chair, Brushes, and Palette  
*undated, oil on canvas,  
100 x 81 cm*

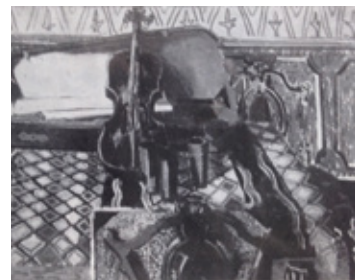


consistent discipline was repeatedly inculcated into the consciousness of the young Marguerite. This was in contrast to the rather indifferent Catholic education of her future husband Maurice, which probably led to Marguerite's able commandeering and management of her husband's studio and career, as well as her own. Despite her family's leaning towards engineering, Marguerite chose to pursue a "classical" course at the Lycée Molière, focusing on literature rather than mathematics.

There is no specific information about Marguerite's life between her graduation from lycée and her meeting and subsequent engagement to Maurice Brianchon in 1933. She attended classes at a variety of the more casual art schools in Paris until 1926: the Académie Julian, the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, the Académie Scandinave and the Académie Andre Lhote. These establishments were more hospitable both to women and to artists and individuals who did not fit the classic art school model (at the time) of meticulous and detail oriented rendering of classical plaster casts, or precise craftsmanship. In particular the Académie Julian had seen the likes of Derain, Denis, Vuillard and Bonnard pass through its classes, painters who would heavily influence Louppe and her husband. Also innovators such as DuBuffet, Duchamp and Louise Bourgeois studied there. They co-existed in the same art world as Louppe and although they did not affect her style in a discernable way, she was clearly aware of them and cognizant of their contributions. The Académie Julian fostered and nurtured a spirit of independence and radicality. This was internalized in Marguerite's work and led not so much to a stark break from contemporary visual tropes as it did to a subtle re-imagining of existing stylistic conventions. Many of these conventions were generated by predecessors such as Bonnard, Derain and Vuillard, and became the focus of Legault, Oudot and Brianchon.

According to her son, Pierre-Antoine Brianchon's, narrative of his father's life in the *Catalogue Raisonné Brianchon*, Marguerite and Maurice met at an event at the Académie Julian, introduced by the painter Oudot. Brianchon had decided not to attend the École des Beaux-Arts (though he would eventually teach there for three decades), instead choosing the École des Arts-Décoratifs. The two thus had something in common; they were outsiders from the traditional Beaux-Arts centered academic establishment. Brianchon was making a name for himself; as a painter, a professor and as a designer of sets and costumes for the ballet and opera. Louppe was only three and a half years Brianchon's junior, so was a contemporary of his, and had been a part of the art scene for at least a decade. They were married on the 18th of June 1934 and Pierre-Antoine was born in 1935.

The work of a youthful Louppe appeared in an article on the artist, written by Marcel Zahar in the periodical *l'Artiste et les Artistes*, in 1934. The most enigmatic of these images were two self-portraits, illus. 1 & 3 (illus. 2 is a photograph of Louppe in her wedding gown, included to indicate that the portraits appear to be of the artist herself) which represent the dual, and competing, responsibilities of the society woman artist. Painted in loose brushstrokes, illus. 1 shows a pensive and thoughtful sitter in her boudoir or bedroom. She averts her eyes from the viewer, but we are made well aware of the fact that she feels uncomfortably on display. Louppe cleverly inserts two other viewpoints: a maid gazes into the foreground from the shadows; and we see a second angle of the sitter via the full length mirror that reflects light onto the scene from a window on a wall behind us. In illus. 3, the subject is much less apprehensive and much more intent—she is occupied in a professional activity, examining a painting, though still very much in a domestic frame of mind (she wears the same dressing gown as in the previous painting). As is seen in many of her still-lives, Louppe often placed an empty chair in front of her arrangements, tempting the viewer to imagine the artist, or themselves, present in the picture.



Marguerite Louppe, illustration 1, 3, 4, early paintings (undated), oil on canvas. Illustration 2. unknown photographer, Marguerite Louppe in her wedding dress.



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**MARGUERITE LOUPPE**

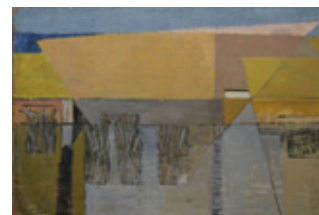
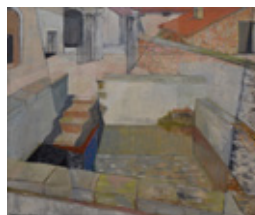
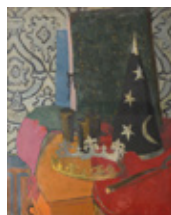
Telephone, Newspaper and Vase  
*undated, oil on canvas,  
60 x 81 cm*

These two paintings represent the early period in the artist's visual vocabulary, a lexicon that would change quite subtly, but drastically, over the years. She depicts herself in these images as bourgeois housewife, both in the languid pose in her boudoir, but also in her choice of objects to portray in the still life—a beautifully upholstered chair, a classical bust and flowers in full blossom on the bough—all seem accoutrements of privilege. Louppe would continue to experiment with objects, alternating between a more bare bones practicality of drafting triangle and artist's tools, and a festive selection of fans, flowers, and vases, but frequently returning to the empty chair as metaphor of the artist's presence. Pierre-Antoine described his mother's artistic practice as an amateurish situation in which she turned the family living room on the rue Saint-Philibert into her studio while Maurice worked at his own place on the rue de Consiglier Collignon. It seems a bit harsh, even if it were to some extent factually accurate.

Frustratingly, Marguerite Louppe rarely dated her paintings, so any chronology has to be deduced through catalogue and press publications and stylistic similarities. Illus. 4 is a clipping of a still life that appeared in the Salon de Tuileries in 1942. Even 8 years after the paintings made in the early thirties, we see an evolution of subject matter and in illus. 5, painterly style. The three paintings are linked by the series of props that seemed to fascinate Louppe at this time. The violin and its case, the tall, gold-flecked tumblers and the wand, and the crown and magician's hat all reference the arts—music, theater and performance. Perhaps this was to do with Brianchon's association with the ballet, opera and theater. In all three there are also the drawing portfolios frequently seen in Louppe's paintings, a stand-in for the graphic arts as well. Both illus. 4 and 6 are rendered in the painterly brushwork seen in the earlier images, with an increased fascination with pattern derivative of Matisse. Illus. 5 would seem to be from a later date. Here the artist is moving into her mature painting style—rendering planes as flat solid regions of color, and exchanging the more lugubrious edges of the violin and tablecloth in illus. 4, and the flickering edges of the crown and the tentative wand in illus. 6 for the prismatic edges of the portfolios and violin case. The violin is also intersected by diagonals that seem to form a series of ghost planes that unify the painting, forming associations of forms beyond their presence as objects.

Pierre-Antoine describes his mother primarily as a manager of his father's career, and his depiction of his parent's relationship falls into a stereotype of the genius, his father, relying on Marguerite for all aspects of his business. He even expected her to drive the family car from Paris to Italy on their first road trip in 1952 because he was too absorbed in the passing landscape. The most repeated story, one which Pierre-Antoine tells and that was even repeated in *Le Figaro* in 1951, occurred during Brianchon's solo exhibition at the Louvre: Marguerite was promised and received a Basset hound from Maurice for successfully planning and hanging his exhibition at the museum. Marguerite did indeed oversee her husband's career, but this seems more out of necessity than any agreed gender-based roles they accepted. Success in an artistic practice is rare and often fleeting, and it rarely comes to both partners. It was also close to impossible for women to achieve this from the 1930's through the 1960's when Marguerite was professionally active. Maurice relied on certain types of paintings that were successful with collectors—ballet scenes largely drawn from the productions he designed, scenes of socialites at the races, and landscapes, both rural and urban. Free from fiduciary concerns, Marguerite ended up being the far more experimental artist in the relationship.

The record of projects and exhibitions in which Louppe and Brianchon participated, evidences a different, far less fictionalized, perspective of the partnership. What emerges is one more equitable, showing Brianchon as a colleague of Louppe, as well as her husband. One might speculate he used his influence as a successful artist in order to enable her to exhibit her work, but even before his rise in the French art world, they were exhibiting together, as equals.



Marguerite Louppe, illustration 4 - 8, paintings (undated), oil on canvas

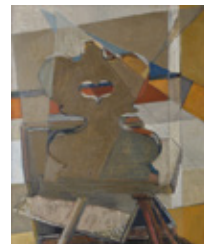
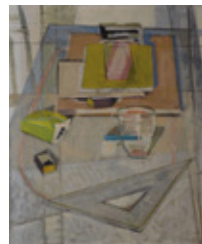
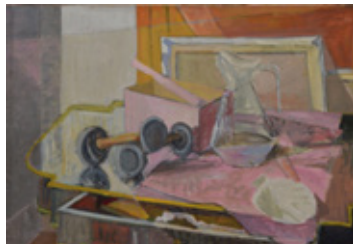


In January 1936, Henri Héraut organized a group exhibition at the respected Galerie Charpentier entitled *Premier Salon de la Nouvelle Génération* in which were being exhibited the “elite of the young painters,” including both Louppe and Brianchon. The exhibition also included the work of Oudot, Legeult and Terechkovitch. Looking into the prices listed for the exhibition *La Femme et les Peintres et Sculpteurs Contemporains* which took place from 12 Dec. 1941 through 11 Jan. 1942, at Charpentier, and which also included Van Dongen, Bonnard, Maillol, Segonzac, Oudot, Roualt, Braques and Denis, Louppe’s small *Figure de Femme* sold for 8,000 Francs, which was the average price of a work in the show. Brianchon’s “Femme au Canape” sold for 15,000 Francs, showing his above-average standing in the art market of the time; but the Bonnard was listed for 280,000 Francs and the Roualt 135,000. From this we can draw the conclusion that Louppe and Brianchon inhabited the same general league at that time. Over the years Marguerite exhibited her work in Paris at Galerie Charles-August Girard, Galerie Druet, Galerie Louis Carre, and Galerie Rene Drouet.

Louppe and Brianchon reveled in their position within the thriving art world that existed in Paris until the 1960’s. Brianchon collaborated with Poulenc on his operas, and with Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud on their theatrical productions. Louppe produced a series of 26 gouaches, reproduced as lithographs for the novel *Le Jardin des Bêtes Sauvages* of Nobel-prize nominated author Georges Duhamel in 1950. Sadly, the one project that was known to have been a collaboration between Maurice and Marguerite, a series of three murals for the conservatoire de Musique et d’Art Dramatique de Paris created in 1943 has disappeared. The schools of music and drama separated soon after the war and subsequent renovations and demolitions have left no record of the murals.

In 1960, the couple purchased Truffières, a country house in rural Dordogne, and split their time between the country and Paris. Marguerite Louppe had her own space in which to work on numerous canvasses at the same time, and a legitimate studio for the first time. The money that came in from sales of Maurice’s work allowed for a comfortable life and they could devote themselves full-time to their practices. Louppe’s two story studio was an auxiliary building attached to the main house while Maurice’s studio was a detached house about a minute’s walk across the lane from where they lived. Louppe began exploring her life-long fascination with the resonance of line, geometry and pattern in everyday forms and in the vernacular architecture and structures of the hamlet. Truffières is something more than a collection of farmhouses—the consistent architecture of soundly crafted arches, pillars and dormer windows is dispersed amongst all the nine houses of the hamlet. These houses are expanded with more rustic added walls and secondary structures. All this hints at a 17th century monastery or manor, which would account for the consistent architectural detailing. This unity is not just in the masonry work; a hidden geometry regulates the space of Truffières, and it is through these long gone architects’ hands that Marguerite Louppe discovered a fitting subject for her later paintings, one that she would investigate for the last 30 years of her working life.

Illus. 7-9 are examples of Louppe’s townscapes of Truffières, and we can see the trajectory of her experimentation. The buildings themselves also follow a mysterious organization, seeming to form courtyards and practical groupings, but just as one begins to sense some kind of pattern, a new annex, added at a later period bursts from a wall at an acute angle—jumbled country walls delineated by the straight and/or clean lines of a pilaster or arch. From installation photographs and catalogues from later exhibitions in her career, it seems plausible that Louppe enjoyed shifting gears between more impressionistic still lifes and landscapes to daring compositions—abstractions of the local vistas. Louppe was aware of what sold and what fulfilled her artistic curiosity, so the impression that she became “more abstract” as she matured artistically may be a false one.



Marguerite Louppe, illustration 9 – 12, paintings (undated), oil on canvas

Between the still lifes of the forties and the above landscapes, there is an increase in what is not perceived by the eye, and the same applies to the still lifes that follow. In illus. 7 and 9, 7 being a view into the small utility pool at the front of the artist's house in Truffières and 9 a view through the hedges behind the house towards Louppe's studio, the picture plane becomes crowded with regulating lines and angles. The lines of perspective take on a life of their own, becoming solid boundaries of form and shadow and even refracting light in illus. 7. In illus. 9, the sky is so full of angled shards and the foreground so segregated by extended verticals from the hedges that the quiet view of the farmhouse is a confusing tangle of reflections and extrusions. Illus. 8 has reduced the view from the house completely into irregular planes punctuated by abstracted vegetal objects.

Louppe also painted her studio's interior, investigating the correlation between the tall and lanky forms of the easels with the perspective of the studio, or repeatedly painting a table with a few sculptural objects; flowers, fans, and vases; then alternating these solid rounded or irregular forms with much more purely geometric devices—books and draftsmen's triangles. There is a poetic interest in the everyday life of the workman's or artist's table, very similar in emotion to the stark and overly simplified and abstracted bottles and pipes of LeCorbusier's Purist canvasses. The landscapes are quite similar to the still lifes, they are scaled-up versions of the tabletops. Wagons and farm structures are substituted for books and pitchers and they are placed within a built background of larger buildings, terraces and lanes. The regulating geometries that allowed a line to form the edge of a table, or the folded page of a book and the hypotenuse of the draftsman's triangle are now the long gray shadows of the sun low on the horizon, the roofline of a house and a length of lumber piled in the back of a wagon.

Louppe painted both in Paris and Truffières, and though her style does not alter, she relished the difference in props that the city and country afforded her. Harkening back to the earlier boudoir self-portrait, she created an intimate drama on the top of a side table in illus. 10, playing the rounded forms such as the barbells, shell and water pitcher off the sharp corners of the table itself and the box towards the back, while the slightly opened drawer offers a touch of mystery. Illus. 11 and 12 are dryer but adventurous images: illus. 11 creates an abstract sculptural association amongst the objects on the artist's desktop. The architect's triangle becomes Louppe's symbol of the geometric opposition between 2D form and 3D object, as well as her personal signifier. This arrangement in particular seems to indicate her interest in, if not adherence to, the purist style. Illus. 12 is a meditation on the sensual curves of a simple country chair. The triangle has now become embedded in the picture itself, as has the desk. Louppe's chair is the symbol of the artist's presence and stands over a portfolio and an open paint box. It is the center of attention; the artist's place, stripped bare of all ostentation except the simplest decoration, afloat within an ether of infinite mathematical possibilities.

The year before Brianchon died, Louppe had an exhibition at the Galerie Des Granges in Geneva, at the start of 1978. She exhibited at the Galerie Yoshii, Paris, in 1980, and her final exhibition was at the Galerie Paul Valotton in Lausanne in 1985. In these exhibitions she showed a combination of her faceted and geometric tablescapes and landscapes as well as a series of spontaneous and lighthearted still lifes: her late practice somehow poised in the middle between her cubist/purist impulses and her comfortable native impressionism. Marguerite had once explained her feelings about art to Pierre-Antoine's friend Yolande Calvet : that is was a calling, much like taking religious vows and joining a monastic order; that it demanded an inordinate amount of time and devotion. Sadly Marguerite's last ten years were plagued with declining vision and eventual blindness, but they were a chance at an artistic liberation as well, a time for a much deeper exploration and devotion.

*William Corwin*

1. Fonds Galerie Charpentier; Archives et Dossiers for the exhibitions "La Femme et les Peintres et les Sculpteurs" (1941-42); "La Vie Familiale Scenes et Portraits" (1944); "L'Aquarelle" (1944); "Le Pain et les Vin" (1954), Kandinsky Library, Pompidou Center
2. Brianchon, Pierre-Antoine; "Souvenirs sur Brianchon"; Maurice Brianchon: Catalogue de l'oeuvre Peint; La Bibliothèque des Arts; 2008
3. Vauxcelles, Louis; "Le Salon des Tuileries"; *Le Monde Illustré: Miroir du Monde*; 1939/06/03
4. Centenaire du Lycee Moliere: Memorial 1888-1988; Association des Anciennes et Anciens Elèves, 1988
5. See ii.
6. Unattributed press clipping from the M. Louppe Dossier at the Kandinsky Library, Pompidou Center
7. Invitation to the "Premier Salon de la Nouvelle Generation;" January 21, 1936, Galerie Charpentier, Fonds de la Galerie Charpentier; Kandinsky Library, Pompidou Center
8. See i.
9. Marguerite Louppe (exhibition Catalog); Galerie Paul Vallotton, Lausanne; 1985
10. Interview conducted by the author with Yolande and Bernard Calvet, and Odile Valensi, February 2014



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**MARGUERITE LOUPPE**

View of the Basin, Truffieres

*undated, oil on canvas,*

*64.8 x 81 cm*





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**MAURICE BRIANCHON**

Les blés avant l'orage,  
1969, oil on canvas,  
65 x 92 cm

## **WILLIAM CORWIN**

William Corwin is a sculptor, writer and Curator. Working with David Hirsh and his collection of Marguerite Louppe and Maurice Brianchon he co-curated Marguerite Louppe & Maurice Brianchon: Painters' Lives at The Williams Center Gallery, Lafayette College, and curated Perle Fine/Marguerite Louppe: New York/Paris at the Freedman Gallery, Albright College, both in 2017. Corwin exhibits his work with Geary Contemporary Gallery in Manhattan. He will have his second solo exhibition with the gallery in September 2018. His sculpture was featured in the exhibition Politicizing Space in 2017 at The Shiva Gallery at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, curated by Charlotta Kotik. He writes reviews and publishes interviews for The Brooklyn Rail, Frieze, Bomb Magazine, and ArtPapers Magazine. Since 2009 Corwin has been interviewing artists for Alanna Heiss' radio station Clocktower Radio. For Clocktower Corwin has interviewed many art-world luminaries such as David Hockney, Lynda Benglis, Dread Scott, Marilyn Minter, Sarah Lucas, Tracey Emin, and James Franco. His interviews have been anthologized in *The Little Magazine in Contemporary America* published by the University of Chicago Press in 2015, *About Trees* published by Broken Dimanche Press in 2015 and *Tell Me Something Good* published by David Zwirner Books in 2017.

## **DAVID HIRSH**

David Hirsh graduated from Lafayette College in 1997 with a B.A. in International Affairs and a minor in Art History. While at Lafayette, he interned at the Holly Solomon Gallery in New York. This gave him the opportunity to work with the works of great artists like Gordon Matta-Clark, Nam June Paik and William Wegman. His studies under the professors of art history at Lafayette and the experience at Holly Solomon gave Hirsh a lasting passion for art. While his professional career steered him towards the world of finance, he kept this enthusiasm for art alive as an avid collector. He developed an interest in the artwork of a distant great aunt, Marguerite Louppe and her husband, Maurice Brianchon through his friendship with their son Pierre-Antoine Brianchon. Upon the death of Pierre-Antoine, Hirsh inherited a portion of the Brianchon-Louppe estate. For nearly a decade, he has been organizing the Brianchon-Louppe archives in the artists' French country estate of Truffieres and has developed his own Brianchon-Louppe collection. The works in this exhibition are taken from this collection.

#### CURATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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synersea

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Rey, Robert, *Maurice Brianchon*, Musée des Art Decoratifs Palais du Louvre/Mourlot Freres, Paris, 1951.

*Marguerite Louppe*, Galerie Paul Vallotton, Lausanne; 1985



## MAURICE BRIANCHON

Avant le départ, *undated, oil on panel, 15 x 32 cm*  
 Ballet set design, *gouache and pencil on paper*  
 Bal masqué, 1948, *oil on panel, 33 x 55 cm*  
 Conversation à la plage, circa 1951, *gouache, 32 x 23 cm*  
 La place de Passy sous la neige, 1943, *oil on canvas, 25 x 34.5 cm*  
 Les blés avant l'orage, 1969, *oil on canvas, 65 x 92 cm*  
 Les figues, *undated, oil on panel, 24.5 x 29.5 cm*  
 Les grenouilles, 1936, *oil on panel, 10 x 18 cm*  
 Nature morte aux brioches, 1963, *oil on canvas, 65 x 92 cm*  
 Nature morte aux pommes, 1970, *oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm*  
 Nature morte aux raisins noirs, 1967, *oil on canvas, 50 x 61 cm*  
 Nu assis, 1946, *oil on canvas, 92 x 65 cm*  
 Portrait of Marguerite Louppe, 1934, *oil on canvas, 51 x 46 cm (cover)*  
 Sketchbook from the Coronation of Elizabeth II, circa 1953, *pencil, pen and gouache on paper*  
 Sketchbook from New York, circa 1959, *pencil, pen and gouache on paper*  
 Sketches for ballet and theatrical designs, *dimensions and dates variable*

## MARGUERITE LOUPPE

2 studies for posters for Galerie Drouet, 1958 *each 63.5 x 48 cm*  
 63, *undated, oil on canvas, 54.5 x 65 cm*  
 Abstract with purple tips, *undated, pencil drawing, 63.5 x 48 cm*  
 Bouteilles et flacons, *undated, oil on canvas, 81 x 100 cm*  
 Carriole jaune, *undated, oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm*  
 Chair, brushes and palette, *undated, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm*  
 City scene "fleurs," *undated, ink drawing*  
 Cityscape, *undated, oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm*  
 Dimanche, à Saint Cloud, *undated, oil on canvas, 59.5 x 81 cm*  
 Escargots, *oil on panel, 22 x 34 cm*  
 Glass distilling vessel with white orchid, *undated, oil on canvas, 65 x 54 cm*  
 Gray tray on table, *undated, ink and watercolor, 46 x 53 cm*  
 Interior, Truffières, *undated, oil on canvas, 53 x 65 cm*  
 l'Eventail, *undated, oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm (back cover)*  
 Le jardin des bêtes sauvages, Book, 1934, by Georges Duhamel (illustrated by Marguerite Louppe), Mercure de France  
 Le post TSF, *oil on canvas, 92 x 73 cm*  
 Les buis, *undated, oil on canvas, 73 x 93 cm*  
 Les trois chevalets, *undated, oil on canvas, 116 x 89.3 cm*  
 Oil lantern, *undated, ink drawing*  
 Rustic chair, *undated, ink drawing*  
 Rustic chair, *undated, oil on canvas, 82 x 66.5 cm*  
 Statue of Liberty with news clipping, *undated, collage, 48.5 x 31 cm*  
 Studio still-life with sketch, *undated, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm*  
 Tabletop still-life, *undated, oil on canvas, 37.5 x 80 cm*  
 Telephone, Newspaper and Vase, *undated, oil on canvas, 60 x 81 cm under Tabletop still-life*  
 The dinner party, *undated, ink and Watercolor, 24 x 37 cm*  
 Two plates, *undated, oil on canvas, 60 x 81 cm*  
 View of the basin, Truffières, *undated, oil on canvas, 64.8 x 81 cm*

## OTHER ARTISTS

Andre Dunoyer de Segonzac, Portrait du peintre Maurice Brianchon, circa 1953, *ink drawing, 22.5 x 18 cm*  
 Aristide Maillol, *ink drawing, 31 x 20 cm*  
 Cecil Beaton, photograph of Maurice Brianchon, 1960  
 Francis Poulenc, autographed musical passage  
 Henri Matisse, *lithograph, 76 x 57 cm*  
 Jacques Villon, *inscribed card*  
 Marcel Gromaire, *ink drawing, 32 x 15 cm*  
 Ossip Zadkine, *drawing on postcard*



An abstract painting featuring a central, dark, organic shape that resembles a stylized figure or a large, dark, rounded object. This central form is surrounded by a fan-like arrangement of radiating lines or rays, primarily in shades of yellow and orange, which emanate from a small, bright orange-red point. The background is composed of various geometric and organic shapes in muted colors like blue, grey, and brown. The overall style is expressive and gestural, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of movement. The painting is signed 'marguerite coupe' in the bottom right corner.

Walsh Gallery  
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*marguerite coupe*